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CHAPTER XI

HUNTING AND FISHING

There is nothing in which a Karen delights so much as to hunt, unless it be the gastronomic pleasures that follow a successful chase. Schoolboys spend their Saturdays in the jungle with their slingshots and blowpipes. Teachers and clerks spend their holidays in the same way. The villager may go by himself to stalk deer or shoot birds and other game along the runways; but the sport that he enjoys most is the drive for game, which is abundant in the hills of Burma, participated in by all the men of the village armed with their weapons and nets. A promising place is chosen, such as the open end of a ravine, where some of the hunters stretch and make fast their nets and retire into an ambush near at hand. The others of the party go to the far end of the area included in the drive and begin to beat the bushes with their spears and knives, while shouting and making a great noise generally. The game is thus driven from cover to the nets, where it usually gets entangled and is soon dispatched by the spears and crossbows of the men waiting there. Nearly all kinds of game are caught in this manner, from rabbits to tigers and elephants. Pigs and deer are, however, most commonly hunted in this way. This is men's sport, and the women never take part in it, so far as I know. The game is divided among the hunters, each sharing more or less equally. If any parts of a carcass are supposed to possess medicinal value, they are appropriated by the one who killed the animal and distributed by him as he thinks best.

Besides the ordinary weapons used in warfare and described in the chapter dealing with that subject, the Karen employ in the chase the blow-gun, the crossbow, the bow, and the spear. The blow-gun is similar to that used in Malaysia, Borneo, and the Philippine Islands, but is not decorated as are those of the Malay tribes. The implement consists of a ten or twelve-foot length of a slim variety of bamboo, the tube or bore of which is the size of a small pencil. The length is first straightened by being hung from a tree with a weight of stones or logs to the bottom end. The transverse

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lowed to dry for a short time; but if kept too long it loses i
noxious quality.

The crossbow will send an arrow thirty or forty yards wi
considerable accuracy. Those skilled in the use of the weapon c
shoot to a greater range. The arrow will pierce the body of a m
752 or a tiger and sometimes protrude on the other side. Wh
wounded by a poisoned dart the Bwe may bind up the wound wi
the juice from young bamboo shoots, but he immediately tries
obtain what he considers a good antidote, namely, the hog-plu
(Spondius mangifera), which he eats either dry or green. Faili
to find this remedy, he resorts to alum. The Paku tribesmen eat
little of the poisonous gum itself, thus producing vomiting, whi
seems to counteract the effect of the poison in the wound. Th
sometimes apply alum to the injured part and bind it up. The Bu
mese, who greatly fear the consequences of being infected with t
poison, poultice the wound with white sweet potato, which th
chew into a paste for the purpose.[4]

411 The Karen have a kind of bow that resembles in general t
long bow used in the English Army back in the fourteenth ce
tury. It is called "hki p' ti" and is fashioned of bamboo with el
tic ends, being fitted with two parallel strings held an inch apa
by little struts of bamboo. A tiny mat is plaited between t
strings at the center to hold the pebbles or mud balls that are us
instead of arrows. A block of hard wood, some four inches long a
an inch and a half wide, is lashed to the middle of the bow. Th
serves as a handle by which a twisting motion is imparted to t
bow when it is sprung, thus enabling the ball or pebble to pass
one side of the bow-shaft. This weapon is much used by childr
in shooting birds and small animals.

224 The trap is one of several automatic contrivances which t
Karen fashion and leave in places frequented by birds or anim
for their capture. Besides the spring trap, there are the box tr
and the pitfall. As the name of the last contrivance suggests, t
pitfall is a large hole that has been dug deep enough to prevent
animal from jumping out, once it has fallen in. All traces of t
digging are obliterated, and the top is covered with branches a

[4] *Cf.* Mason, *British Burma*, 489. For an account of the poison made in Borneo from
Ipoh *(Antiaris toxicaria)* see Hose and MacDougall, *Pagan Tribes of Borneo*, Vol. I, 218. Sk
and Blagden, in *Pagan Tribes of the Malay Peninsula*, Vol. I, Chap. VI, pp. 242, ff., give
account of the preparation of poisons employed by the various tribes of that country. But a
of the area in which the poisons are used does not include Burma, probably because their
among the Karen was unknown to the writers.

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twigs and then disguised with leaves. The unsuspecting animal, going in search of water, steps on the insecure footing and falls through. As its efforts to escape are unavailing, it is soon found and dispatched by the spears and arrows of the hunters.

The box trap is a rude box-like structure varying in size from those built to catch rats to one, which I saw, designed to put an end to the prowlings of a tiger. They are laid up like a miniature log cabin, with an opening either at one end or on top. A dog or some other live bait is tied inside of the larger traps, and when the wild animal jumps in to seize the decoy, he must needs touch the string attached to the trigger that supports a trap-door weighted with stones or logs. The door is thus released, falls, and closes the opening. Oftener the door of such a trap is made from a tree with thorny bark, and the game only wounds itself by struggling to get out. There is usually little chance to escape for an animal caught in one of these traps.[5] (See lower illustration on page 100.)

The spring trap, commonly called in Karen "wa hkaw,"[6] is built across an opening in a game-run or in a fence around a paddy-field. It is fitted with a single spear. The name "meu" is applied to a larger trap of this kind, which has a row of bamboo spears. A description of the former will suffice to show the plan and operation of the trap, which, we will assume, is built across a game-run. At some spot in the jungle, where the runway can be narrowed to a mere opening by driving a few bamboos into the ground on either side, the spring trap is set up. It consists of a bamboo spear some five feet long projecting horizontally through a hole in a bamboo post, its point but a few inches from the opening through which the animal must pass. The shaft of the spear reaches back several feet to the end of a stiff bamboo pole, also in horizontal position and nearly at right angles to the spear. The function of this pole, which is rigidly fastened to a tree or heavy post at its butt end, is to thrust the spear forward at the right moment. The free end of the pole moves along a horizontal rack or bar and, when pulled back, is held by a catch. A stout string fastened to this catch is stretched across the opening in such a way that the animal

[5] The similarity of these traps to those of Malaysia and Borneo is striking: see Hose and MacDougall, *The Pagan Tribes of Borneo*, Vol. I, 145, ff.; Skeat and Blagden, *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula*, Vol. I, 206, ff.

[6] The name "wa hkaw" is taken from the spear that forms an essential feature of this kind of trap. The head of the spear is of bamboo, being cut from the side of a large piece. The hard siliceous skin of the bamboo is left on to form the cutting edges of the spear. The Karen have different names for different sizes of these traps, which are set for smaller or larger game from wildcats to tigers.

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SETTING A SPRING TRAP ("WA HKAW"), PEGU HILLS
This trap was set to catch a barking-deer.

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A BOX TRAP FOR CATCHING BIRDS
The watcher hides in the pile of straw seen at the right and pulls the string to drop the lid. One hundred and seventy-six parroquets were caught at one drop in this trap. A trough used for hauling out grain stands nearby.

19: Marshall M-6 (ca. 1910) 1922 AP1 Burma
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emerging will run into the string, lift the catch, and thereby receive the thrust of the spear in its body. (See page 100.) 224

Small animals, such as squirrels and rats, are killed by means of a heavy pole, one end of which is propped up from the ground just inside a tight fence enclosing or partly enclosing a field. Lengths of large bamboo lead the rodents through holes in the fence, and as they emerge on the inside they have to push by a string which releases the little prop under the log. Such traps are called "tu."

A small trap for catching rats consists of a joint of large bamboo fitted with a trigger like that on English steel traps, the trigger being connected with a bow of bamboo that fits over the open end of the section. The bow is opened, bait is placed inside, and the trigger is set. The rat enters, touches the food, the bow springs down over the open end, and he is imprisoned inside.

Birds are caught in a box trap similar to the one described on page 99, but of lighter construction and larger dimensions. In the specimen shown in the illustration (page 100) one hundred and twenty-seven pigeons were taken at one fall, I was told. It was set near the paddy threshing-mat, and a line of grain led the birds into it. The man who was watching the trap lay concealed in a pile of straw a few yards away and, when he saw the box well filled, pulled the string attached to the support upon which the end of the cover rested. The captured pigeons were killed by spear-thrusts through the cracks of their cage. 223

Pigeons are also taken by means of bamboo cages divided into two compartments. A young bird, caught before it can fly, is placed in one of the compartments as a decoy; and the cage, covered with green leaves, is hung near a tree in fruit to which the birds resort for food, or it is set near a field that is known to be a favorite feeding-ground of the pigeons. The calls of the decoy attract usually an aggressive male into the open compartment, the trigger snaps, and the door flies shut. Birdlime, made from the sap of certain varieties of the banyan, is smeared on twigs to catch small birds. [314]

Besides birdlime, cages, and box traps, various kinds of snares are utilized in capturing birds. A noose, made of tough fibre or hair, is hung over a path in the thick grass just high enough to catch the head of a pheasant or jungle-fowl as it walks along. Sometimes a series of standing snares or loops are used. A chain

19: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1922 AP1 Burma
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223 of twenty or thirty bamboo splints, each fitted with its own slip-noose, is staked on the ground by means of a spike of horn or bamboo attached to one end of the chain. The nooses form a succession of wickets encircling perhaps a clump of grass or an open space in the jungle. Two or three such chains may be connected to describe a larger circle. In either case the circle is left open in the direction from which the birds are expected to approach. Grain may be scattered along the path and into the circle, or a decoy cock may be tethered there. If a decoy is not used, a boy hides near at hand until the birds are within the ring and then starts them to running by coming into the open. Otherwise, they wander and pick about until startled by the decoy or something else. In trying to scurry away at least some of the flock thrust their heads through the open loops and pull them tighter and tighter by their struggles to escape. It only remains for the hunter to come and carry off his catches.

224 231 In the Toungoo Hills the Karen hunt with dogs, which they know under the name of "htwi maw seh" and train for use in the chase. These dogs are small, smooth-haired, and allied to the terrier, and follow game with great tenacity. They are highly valued by the Karen, the price of a good one equaling that of an ordinary pony or buffalo. Deer are said to be so afraid of them that they lose strength when pursued by one of these curs and thus become an easy prey for the hunter. While in pursuit the dogs yelp continually. The hunter has only to follow them to be sure of his game in the end. They do not hesitate to trail a species of large snake, which is considered palatable eating by the Karen, but will not attack it. They will pull down a deer and set upon a bear or boar, but stand in fear of tigers and leopards. Indeed, they turn back from the track of a tiger, if they come upon it.

224 Elephant hunting, to which the Karen were much given in the old days, has been revived to a considerable extent in recent years among the Karen of Tavoy and the Tenasserim division. Their practice is to build a large V-shaped stockade and drive the animals into it. At the apex of the stockade they erect a high-fenced enclosure into which tame elephants are sent to mingle with the wild ones. Hunting elephants merely as game is no longer allowed by the Government; but when that practice was tolerated, beaters drove the animals along an elephant-run, while hunters, who were adepts at spear-throwing, stood in wait behind trees and speared

19: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1922 AP1 Burma
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the great creatures as they rushed past. The effort of the spearmen was either to thrust the elephants through the heart or to hamstring and disable them with their long knives, in order that they might be put to death later.

The Karen hunts primarily in order to obtain food, although he certainly enjoys the excitement of the chase as well. But he is not a sportsman, in the proper sense of that term. He does not discriminate in his slaughter of wild creatures. He does not look far enough ahead to appreciate the necessity of sparing the females among the game animals, even those that are with young. He is apt in imitating the calls of many animals and birds. Almost every Karen can entice the barking-deer within short range by imitating the cry of its fawn. He does this by putting a green leaf between his lips and blowing through it. The sound thus emitted often brings the doe bounding through the jungle, only to be shot down.

FISHING

The rivers and smaller streams of Burma are full of fish of many kinds and sizes. The Karen is fond of fish for his daily fare, and on the plains the fermented fish-paste of wide repute is a part of his regular diet. Fishing is not confined to the men. Indeed, I have sometimes thought that the women do more of it than the men; but this, if true, is explicable by the fact that many times, while their men folk are at work, the women go to catch a supply for the next meal.

The Karen on the plains use much the same methods in fishing as the Burmese, which they have probably copied from the latter. In this chapter, however, I shall confine myself to an account of the practices that have come under my observation along the hill streams. Nets, large and small, baskets, traps, jars, weirs, the hook and line, and spears are the more common kinds of implements employed by the highland folk in obtaining their aquatic food.

In shallow water many fish are taken by means of the "thwe," which is an oval hoop a foot or more in its longest diameter, on which a net of cotton strands is woven. The fisherman wades through the water with his net in hand, plunges it down over the fish within his reach, and scoops it up and out toward him. In the shallow water of submerged fields what may be called a push-net of closely woven material ("hti hsaw") is used in catching minnows. It has two handles that cross and form the sides of the

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
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341. KAREN LIQUOR-STILL.

miniature bamboo hut is made (*tû-lhû*, No. 337), and furnished with utensils or symbols of such. The joints of bamboo piled against the horizontal bar represent vessels for the blood of the offering; the whole offering is really appropriated by the votaries. The *yahán* have persuaded the Karéns under their influence to discontinue keeping animals, so as to be out of temptation to sacrifice to *nats*. The Karén idea of *nat* is exclusively an evil spirit, whereas the Burmans have the conception of *thadyû* and *byammâ*, beings of a transfigured human nature; by them *nat* is chiefly used in this sense (p. 186). The Karéns also offer to the *nats* the liquor they brew (*kaung*), which is distilled from a wort made by setting boiled rice to ferment. The drinking of this offering at the shrine is accompanied by saltatory movements. What the Karéns can save, they invest in purchase of elephants (No. 333). Owing to the transient nature of the hill-settlements, the paths do not get well enough worn for pack-oxen. The elephant is the only beast of burden available to them; an elephant can carry five to ten hundredweight in the hills (No. 314). A small village clubs together to buy an elephant to carry in the corn and take the secondary crops to market; well-to-do villages own several elephants. Individuals who own a couple are accounted wealthy, but some own as many as twenty. They hire the animals out for carrying produce or for timber-work, or engage in this business on their own account. Their spare cash the Karéns bury in the earth or hide in growing bamboos. The point of the *dâ* is struck into a green culm so as to open a slit. The rupees are dropped in, the *dâ* pulled out, and not a trace remains. Karéns are good workers in bamboo and cane, and are excellent woodmen. They are expert in

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342. KAREN HIDING COIN IN A GROWING BAMBOO.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
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343. KAREN SPRING-SPEAR (DYAN)

making traps and snares for animals, whose habits they observe closely, and whose calls they mimic. Squirrels are their principal quarry. For deer they set a spring-spear called *dyan* at a salt-lick. This is a source of danger to travellers, who have to be on their guard for the warning sign set at the approaches to the *dyan*. They keep common wild cocks and pheasant cocks, as well as doves, for decoys. The decoy-cock is tied by the leg to a post in the centre of a circle of snares; when a wild bird hears him crow and comes to fight he is caught. [857] The chief game of Karén children is transfixing bamboo hoops as they bound past, a practice for spearing running game. The Karéns use a cross-bow [411] (No. 204), with simple, and occasionally also with poisoned arrows. All the [412] Karén utensils are of home manufacture, with the significant exception of the *dâ* and axe, their chief implements, which are made by Shans and Burmans. [439] They even make rough pottery when at a distance from the market. The [286] women spin, dye, and weave their own yarn; but they are beginning to use the ready-dyed yarn that is imported. Every member of a Karén household 585 labours for the common fund. Young Karéns do not marry till mature—twenty to twenty-four. Marriages are arranged by the elders; but, if a pair mate of their own choice, the lad has to give a buffalo or its value to the girl's parents. Unlike the marriages of the civilised races of the country, the Karén marriage is a great festivity. Karén unmar- 291 [562] ried women wear only a long smock (*thindding*) [224] of plain white. Married women wear a blue embroidered smock over a figured loin- 000 cloth. Men and women

344. KAREN HUNTERS BRINGING IN WILD PIG.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Karen AP7

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[285]
757
753
764

[778
776]

346. KAREN WITH DECOY-COCK.

Men and women labour out-of-doors till about sixty. The oldest women who can move make their daily journey for water, which is fetched and stored in joints of the giant bamboo. Old men occupy themselves with plaiting mats and baskets, and repairing gear. None are idle. The Karéns are acquainted with the medicinal virtues of many plants, such as bitter barks for ague. But all sickness and misfortunes are ascribed to the *nats*. Offerings and charms are relied on more than medicines. When a person dies, the body is treated with great respect, and every kind of offering is made to propitiate the spirit. The corpse is cremated, and the bones are buried at a place devoted to this use (*ayó-daing*), often at a distance, owing to the migrations of villages. Here a shrine is erected, consisting of a miniature hut, upon which a rude carving of a bird always figures. This symbolizes a mythical creature which conveys the spirit over rivers and chasms on its wanderings. For some time after a death, cotton threads are stretched beside the footbridges for the spirit to pass by on, without meeting the living. A shrine similar to that at the *ayódaung* is made at a place where two roads cross, and at each shrine the clothing of the deceased, and sometimes new clothing and utensils, are dedicated. It is at funerals that the dreary Karén music is chiefly heard. The tones are very widely contrasted. The dirge is accompanied by the notes of the *pázi*, a great drum of bronze, cast in the Shan country, in a single piece, though the metal is only the eighth of an inch thick. The *pázi* is struck on the end with a padded hammer for the deep fundamental tone, and flicked on the side with a stick to bring out harmonics an octave or two higher.

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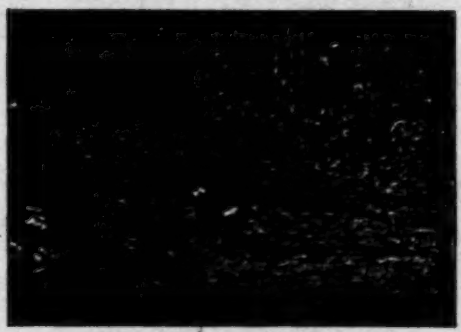
533
[764]
[224]



347. DECOY-COCK IN THE CIRCLE OF SNARES.

000 The *Karennî*, or "Red